

This visionary program, which is essentially a promise between generations, was instituted by President Franklin Roosevelt during the depths of the Great Depression. In the 75 years since its founding, it has become one of the pillars of our society. Social Security has provided older Americans with the supplementary income necessary to achieve a healthy, stable retirement since 1935. It has reduced poverty dramatically among older Americans and given them reliable access to good health care.

Without Social Security, one out of every two seniors would fall into poverty. Disabled individuals and surviving dependents – including millions of children – would find themselves without this critical safety net in their time of need. In New York's 28th Congressional District alone, over 120,000 people received Social Security benefits in 2009, including over 77,000 seniors and nearly 13,000 children who receive benefits because a family member has retired, become disabled, or died.

Despite the program's demonstrated success and longevity over the years, there are some in Congress who say Social Security should be fundamentally altered, even partially or completely privatized.

Congresswoman Slaughter actively opposed President Bush's plan to privatize Social Security and is committed to defeating all efforts that would jeopardize the critical protections of the safety-net, be it entrusting Social Security to the whims of the stock market or cuts in benefits.

In October 2010, Congresswoman Slaughter joined like-minded House colleagues in sending a letter to President Obama expressing their strong support for Social Security and their view that it should be strengthened. The letter states:

"We oppose any cuts to Social Security benefits, including raising the retirement age. We also oppose any effort to privatize Social Security, in whole or in part."

The full text of the letter is below:

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 15, 2010

Dear President Obama:

We write today to express our strong support for Social Security and our view that it should be strengthened. We oppose any cuts to Social Security benefits, including raising the retirement age. We also oppose any effort to privatize Social Security, in whole or in part.

You have charged the National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform with proposing recommendations that improve the long-term fiscal outlook and address the growth of entitlement spending. It is our view that Social Security—which is prohibited by law from adding to the national budget deficit—does not belong as part of those recommendations.

By 2023, Social Security will have built up a \$4.3 trillion surplus, and, without any action, can pay full benefits until 2037 and at least 75 percent of all benefits thereafter. Because Social Security is funded separately from the general treasury and has no borrowing authority, it has not contributed to the federal deficit. Despite these facts, some Commission members have repeatedly alleged the need to cut Social Security for budgetary reasons.

For 75 years, Social Security has been a promise to the American people that if they work hard and pay their fair share, they will have a financially secure retirement. In communities across this country, Social Security benefits are often the only source of income helping families maintain a decent standard of living. Social Security's benefits are modest, averaging less than \$13,000 a year, but they are vital to the vast majority of Americans who receive them.

Cutting Social Security benefits beyond the already scheduled increase in the retirement age from 65 to 67 would create even more needless hardship for millions of vulnerable Americans. This is especially true in the face of an economic downturn that has wiped out trillions of dollars that Americans were relying on for their retirement security and the increased dismantlement of the private and public pension systems.

If any of the Commission's recommendations cut or diminish Social Security in any way, we will stand firmly against them. We urge you to join us in protecting and strengthening Social Security rather than letting it fall victim to a misguided attempt to reduce budget deficits on the backs of working families.

Sincerely,

Goal 5: Build a safe, reliable, and accessible transportation system that meets the needs of all community members, including those with disabilities and limited mobility.